
The Free Presbyterian Church :
An Indictment.

BY

JOHN MURRAY, Provost of Dornoch.

Price 3d.

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(This pamphlet is a revised report of what appeared in the *Northern Chronicle* on 17th June, 1936).

One of the most memorable meetings in ecclesiastical history in the Highlands was held at Dornoch on Monday evening, 15th June, when Provost John Murray, who has now severed his connection with the Free Presbyterian Church, in whose affairs he was for many years a redoubtable leader, addressed a crowded audience in the Territorial Hall and reviewed the now famous dispute in which he was involved.

Long before the time fixed for the meeting the seating capacity of the spacious hall was taxed to its utmost, many of those present having travelled long distances to be present. Even excluding a large representation of journalists up all the way specially from Glasgow and elsewhere, many of those present travelled from places as far distant from Dornoch and much more inaccessible than Inverness, and left the meeting no wise displeased with what they heard in return for all their fatigue in going and returning.

On all hands the opinion was expressed at the end of the meeting that the Provost's statement put quite a different complexion upon the dispute from that commonly entertained, and one far from creditable to the Church.

The Provost attacked in no uncertain terms the methods of the administrators of the

Church's laws throughout the whole dispute, declaring emphatically that the constitution had been torpedoed. What he was up against personally was the shelving of these laws. "The Church is not to blame," he said. "I have every confidence in it from beginning to end. The Church's principles I stand on, but it is those who are administering its laws I am up against."

Among those present at the meeting were Mrs Murray and one of her daughters. That the sympathy of the gathering was with the Provost was evident from the applause which punctuated his attacks on those whom he accused of "mutilating" the Church's laws.

Punctually at 8 o'clock the Provost went on to the platform, and suggested that the meeting should nominate someone to occupy the chair.

Mr A. M. Mackay, Evelix, moved that Dr MacLauchlan, Dornoch, preside.

Dr MacLauchlan took the chair amid applause, and thanked the gathering for the honour they had done him. He was pleased to be there to hear what Provost Murray was going to say on the great question of the Church and its formalities.

"I was brought up in the same school as the Provost," continued Dr MacLauchlan, "my people belonged to what ignorant people called narrow religion. My friends, they were not narrow, they were broad, and it was the people who criticised them who had no breadth of view—(applause). But it is questions of principle that the Provost is fighting here, the principles and fundamentals of the Church of which he is such a strong pillar, and of which he has been such a good friend—(applause). And when a man hoists a principle he must have backbone, and you know as well as I do that the Provost has plenty of that and tenacity of purpose—(applause). It is also a wide-world question, and I am not so sure it has not reached from Peru to Timbuctoo. I don't know what the Provost is going to say, but there is one thing

to be said—that this question must be settled for ever and be finished. I think we have had enough of it"—(applause). Dr MacLauchlan then called on the Provost to deliver his address.

PROVOST MURRAY'S ADDRESS

Provost Murray, who was received with applause, said he was going to give them that night incontrovertible facts which could stand criticism, and it did not matter in the least to what denomination any of them belonged. It did not matter whether they were narrow or broad, the question was a question of the facts of the case—facts which the ordinary man in the street could understand as intelligently as the best man in a chair in their universities. Laws that were laid down, especially ecclesiastical laws, were as intelligible to the ordinary man as to those with the highest intellects. "Now, in the first place," proceeded the Provost, "I can tell you this. Many of you, just because you are not reading underneath the lines, think that I have been censured and expelled from the Free Presbyterian Church. I have neither been censured nor expelled, nor excommunicated if you like to put that term on it. But what has happened is that there is a certain body of men within the Church—I should say the Session and the Northern Presbytery particularly—that have used their so-called authority in such a way that they have destroyed the constitution of the Church they uphold, and have torpedoed the very laws upon which their existence and calling depends. After coming to that invidious position, what they did lately was this—particularly after the Synod at Inverness, when they found themselves in such an intransigent position that they could not justify themselves—they got together, a small coterie of men, which we might style a secret star chamber, or something of that kind, installed into their ecclesiastical counsels, in order to justify to the simple minded what had been done, and get them to open their

mouths and swallow anything—(laughter). The people were expected to take everything for granted without any opportunity of analysing or investigating. That was what happened.

HIS FIRST RESIGNATION.

"You may think then," went on the Provost, "that the first resignation of mine that took place was that handed to the Free Presbyterian Church in April, 1935. This was actually the second time that I had to resign from the office which I held in the Church, just on account of differences of opinion. The first instance happened seven years ago, at the time of the tercentenary celebrations here. I was Provost then, and you will remember that a banquet or dinner was given in the Sutherland Arms Hotel in honour of Lord Rothermere after he received the freedom of the city. We shall call it a city; some people call it a village, but we shall give it its right designation—(laughter). On that occasion we were very happy together, as those at a dinner should be, and I was called upon to give a speech, which I did to the best of my ability in my own poor way. I happened to make a few probably facetious remarks, which appeared in the Press, and after that I was called in question by Mr Finlay Macleod, the minister, as to why they were made, and asked to express at once my sorrow, and recant from what I had done. I absolutely refused to do so—I wouldn't do it—(applause).

"Then there was a Session called and its finding was sent to me, but I just held on as I was, and gave no further reply than that which had already been given—that I wouldn't resile in the slightest from the position I had taken up. I put in my resignation to the session at the time, and thought that would be an end of the business. About three or four weeks after that I got a letter from the Clerk of the Presbytery, Mr Beaton, then of Wick, and I have that letter in my pocket. I don't think it is worth while reading to you

—I have it here if any one questions what I say—(applause).

CIVIL ACTION THREATENED.

That letter told me that the Presbytery had word from the Session laying the fama that I was in company of frivolous people in the town at this banquet, and called upon me for an ample apology and recantation of what I did and a promise never to attend such affairs again. The latter part showed that the finding of the Presbytery was that, if I did not go and make a clean breast of things, and withdraw to the Session, the result would simply be that my name would be put up in Dornoch Church and in Rogart. Whenever I got that letter I immediately sent as reply a very firm letter, saying that if my name was put up in Dornoch and Rogart I would make a civil case of the matter. The whole case then fell to the ground like a pack of cards, and we met together in the Session later on, when their finding was just: 'We have to give you admonitions for the future,' but nothing further was said about the case or what happened—(applause). But the advice that was given by the Rev. Finlay Macleod afterwards was that in future at any civic functions to which I might be called, on account of the office I happened to hold in the Church I would first consult him as to the advisability of my presence there—(laughter). Ladies and gentlemen, do you expect I would give any consent to such fatherly advice as that—(laughter)—advice I would not give to my own son or to the high pretensions of infallibility assumed by the person involved? I did not consider it worth while answering—(applause). But as you may well know, I never did consult or never would consult any person in Church or State just as to what my civic duties were—(applause). I am just mentioning these things as facts which actually happened, and from which you can draw your own conclusions as to whether these incidents supplied an undercurrent of feeling in the present dispute or not."

ANOTHER EPISODE.

Provost Murray then described another "episode" which happened in the Free Presbyterian Church, and perhaps might not be well known to the general public. It was taken up, he thought, at the Synod in Glasgow at the time. They had two very excellent ministers—one of them a Mr Matheson, whom many Free Presbyterians in the county had heard, a man with great ability and intellectual acumen, one of the best preachers they ever had. The other was a lad, who had been educated in Dornoch, and was now a Professor in one of the universities in the United States, John Murray, whose father was a leader in their Church. Murray came home to be licensed, and people were tremendously taken with him. He preached so well that he drew the attention of almost everyone in the Church. "I don't know if the other ministers liked that or not," said the Provost, "probably they did, but strangely enough they found that these two young ministers had one particular point on which they did not agree with the Free Presbyterian Church." Provost Murray explained that the matter at issue was the use of cars or 'buses on the Sabbath, and apparently objection was taken to people using public 'buses even for going to church, but it was all right if a minister hired a car, which was just as much used for pleasure as any 'bus—(laughter). His (Provost Murray's) own personal view was that it was the motive that counted—if cars or 'buses were used on the Sabbath for pleasure, he agreed they should be tabooed. But surely the poor man who could not afford to hire a car was entitled to pay his penny for the 'bus to take him to church—(applause). In any event, the two men were expelled from the Church. One was not licensed, but the other man, although thrown out of the Free Presbyterian Church in this country, was holding on to it in Canada. He was still in the Free Presbyterian Church, notwithstanding the fact that he had been expelled here—(applause).

do with the matter," said Provost Murray, "but when the decision came out my voice was pretty free. I certainly did not hide my opinions. I said that what was done was simply ridiculous, and I strongly objected to it, and that would be known without the slightest doubt. This incident make two instances, but altogether there were three where I was up against the hierarchy within the Church before the present dispute arose, and what I have to say are all facts."

HIS OWN DISPUTE.

Proceeding to review his latest dispute with the Church, the Provost mentioned that at the beginning he was merely asked, as he was previously, to express his regret. There had been no censure passed upon him. To do that there must be a citation and a quorum of the Session. Without these necessary preliminaries it was impossible for a censure to be passed. But something preceded even that. The decision to censure him was come to after a funeral in Laing at the end of March. He only learned this from the Session Clerk after he had undertaken specially to relieve the minister on a Sabbath he should have been at home, and had taken the services. Then the Session Clerk came to him and told him what had been arranged between the minister and Mr Charles Sutherland at Laing a week earlier. So, a day or two after he had taken the services, he challenged the minister on the point at the monthly meeting and tendered his resignation, which, he was told, would have to be accompanied by Mrs Murray's resignation. Both were handed to the minister that day and acknowledged next day. Of course, the minister could not refuse to accept them. It went without saying that a person could resign at any time from any position he held in Church or State for conscientious reasons, according to the Toleration Act passed in the 18th century. To say a person could not resign was pure nonsense and bunkum at that time of day. Such a proposition from intelligent people was ridiculous, and it was more silly for

intelligent people to believe it could be done. It was contrary to the Act, and thank goodness that was one of the bulwarks of their country—a bulwark against Churches which arrogated to themselves so many powers they had no right to at all—(applause). And it was just the fact that he had resigned which landed the Church in "Queer Street," when he threatened civil action on the previous occasion.

THIRD INCIDENT.

But before there could be a Session there must be a quorum. No body could carry on its business in State or Church without there being a quorum. He asserted that when the Dornoch Session first met there was no quorum. The minimum quorum was three, but only two sat on that occasion. There was one man there, Charles Sutherland, who was supposed to be an assessor—(laughter). "He came down from the other side of the county to attend this Session as assessor," said the Provost, "and I can tell you he had no right to be an assessor. I objected to him being there as assessor a year ago. This also might have had a bearing upon the origin of the dispute. The laws of the Church state that no assessor can be appointed if a quorum already exists in a Session, and there was a quorum there because Malcolm Fraser, the minister and myself constituted a quorum. Charles Sutherland had no right to be there, so that the Session was supposed to be constituted by two people who cited me on the 18th of April to attend a Session meeting at the Mound, Golspie, on the 24th of April. I need not have heeded the citation, but from mere courtesy I did so. The citation was for the purpose of considering the resignation of my wife and myself.

SENTENCE PASSED.

"I went to the meeting myself and I told them I would not resign from my position, but if they wished to reconsider their position I would be quite willing to listen to them. They didn't do that, and instead of considering the citation for which my wife and I were

called, they asked me to go outside. I said I would not go outside. I said, 'If you are afraid of your deliberations, I'm not. I will stay where I am'—(applause). Then they passed sentence of six months' suspension from 'orders' for this supposed *fama*, a thing I was never cited for. It was all irregular, all unconstitutional, all abnormal, all entirely out of place from the constitutional point of view. No Church has any right to do that. They torpedoed the very laws upon which they were standing, and if you have no laws to govern a Church, there can be no order; you cannot get on with anything. They were wrong from the beginning in their approach, and if there was a *fama* it had to be proved. Even supposing it was a case of censure, the duty of the minister is to come to you and speak confidentially to you, tell you what has been wrong, and to advise you in the matter for the future, not for the sake of lording it over the heritage of God, but in order to be an example to the flock to which he ministers. Ministers are not lords by scripture, but the servants of those to whom they minister. They are just elders like other men, but teaching elders, with the same authority and nothing more."—(applause).

CONGREGATION DISSATISFIED.

Referring to the petition got up in his favour, Provost Murray said people in the Church were simply taken aback by the judgment of the Session, and he for one knew nothing about the petition or what the petitioners were doing until it was done. He never incited or asked anybody to do anything. "I resigned," he said, "and my business ended there. But the people in our church were not satisfied and petitioned the Presbytery. I will tell you what the Presbytery did and how they administered the law. The Presbytery met at Evelix in answer to the petition. When there, a note came to him, in which they called it an *ex gratia* meeting. Of course, that's a Latin name and it sounds

great—(laughter) — something to favour you. They had no right to call it that at all. In the circumstances it was perfectly normal. The Session, the petitioners, and myself were all present, and the case was gone over. What did the Presbytery do? They said there was no appeal from the Session, hence they could not interfere. It was *ex gratia*. Did you ever hear such rubbish? It discloses either total ignorance of, or utter indifference to, Church law! Not only had the Presbytery—and any Presbytery — the right, but it is the bounden obligation of a Presbytery to interfere if any Session goes wrong, even without being asked to. The Presbytery, without being asked to do its duty, can overthrow any decision of a Session, and what the Session had done was wrong because there was no quorum. These are all facts which cannot be controverted. Notwithstanding that, I was quite willing to re-consider the position. Probably I might have yielded a wee bit. If they had been prepared to let by-gones be by-gones, I might have been prepared to go to this extent—that in the case of a party in my house, where there might be some frivolity, I would forego my liberty of conscience in that respect so far as to prevent frivolity, but simply for the sake of not offending the tender consciences of other persons. I did not tell them that, because the Session would yield nothing, not one iota — (laughter). Needless to say, the meeting ended in something worse than a stalemate—it ended as a farce!

CLERK'S REPORT CHALLENGED.

A fortnight after the Presbytery met at Evelix the Presbytery had another meeting at Dingwall, and confirmed what was done at the *ex gratia* meeting, and censured the petitioners for their obstinacy in not going back to the Church. A few days later an official report was issued to the Press which contained words to the effect that if an elder did not know how to govern or regulate his own house how could

he regulate the House of God? These words were put into the mouth of Mr Macqueen at Evelix, and it was Mr Macqueen who presided at the meeting at Dingwall. Whenever he (Provost Murray) saw the statement in print he wrote to a northern newspaper that it was a deliberate falsehood. Such words were never uttered by Mr Macqueen at Evelix. That paper was afraid to publish the word "falsehood," and the only paper that did it was a southern daily paper — (laughter). Within a week of the meeting at Dingwall a statement appeared in another southern paper disclosing the fact that Mr Macqueen stayed at Balloan on the night on which the party was held. In the statement issued by the Presbytery the fact of having any Christmas festival was marked down as pure Romanism and paganism, and should not be tolerated, notwithstanding the fact that on the very same day the Clerk who wrote that was at a Christmas party at Altnagar—(laughter). It was after the letter was written, accusing the Clerk of falsehood that the contention between Mr Macqueen and the Presbytery arose. He could not say what happened between them, for they were within closed doors, but he knew that accusations were made against each side, particularly at the next meeting of Presbytery at Evelix early in September and later at Bonar during the same month.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

The Provost, continuing, declared he was tremendously sorry for Mr Macqueen. "He has been a very close friend of mine for over thirty years," he said, "and I was associated with him in his family relationships and in Church affairs. I am absolutely sorry for him after what has happened now. Not that my case stands or falls with his—my case, thank the Almighty, stands four-square. But it is not that. It is not a question of whether you approve or disapprove of dancing, but a question whether the Church's laws and constitution are being respected or not. The

question of dancing is a side issue they have tried to bring in, a red herring thrown across your track to take away the scent. If Mr Macqueen has been exonerated, if he has not done anything wrong, then it must necessarily follow that I did nothing wrong because he was simply in the same boat as I was. At the beginning I never gave it out that he was in the house at all, but you couldn't keep these things back. I was asked by ministers but I told them to find out. Mr Macqueen came to my house accidentally that night on Christmas. He was told that we were having a children's party, and that he might not like the noise, but could get a room at the back of the house. I can tell you that from the very start to the very end Mr Macqueen saw everything that I did that night, and we were not separate from the time we met until both of us retired that night. Everything that happened at that party at Balloan that night Mr Macqueen saw and heard and knew, just as much as I did. Well, you might say he was a guest there and had no right to interfere. That may be perfectly true, but next morning we were a bit late in rising, and at breakfast when the girls came in Mr Macqueen said, "You will be very tired the whole of you, after the flings you had last night." That was all that was said about it. I will say this for Mr Macqueen—if he thought there was anything wrong in what had taken place, he would have admonished me, or if not I would not give him credit for being a friend, to say nothing of being a minister. But Mr Macqueen could not have seen anything wrong and no remonstrance was given—(applause). These were the only words spoken about the matter till we went out.

MR MACQUEEN'S ADVICE.

"Some time after that Charlie Sutherland came on the scene. About six weeks or two months later he sent me a letter which was so absurd that I considered it beneath contempt to answer it—(laughter). I simply read it and

threw it in the fire, and I thought there would be nothing more about it. Shortly after that Mr Macqueen came to our house when we were all at dinner, and said, 'I would advise you, Mr Murray, not to hold any of these parties in future. You may not consider it wrong and against your conscience. I know that it isn't, but it is not for that that I am advising you as I do. It is because people are watching for you and waiting to see if they will get an opportunity to take action against you.' Well, I said to Mr Macqueen, 'Look here, Mr Macqueen, I will certainly make a promise to you, not for anything I have done wrong, but to prevent any trouble in the future. I will undertake that there will never be anything more of that kind in my house, just to keep months shut and to stop fault-finding.' I thought there would be no more about it, and did not think of any trouble coming. However, I was wrong in thinking that. You all know what took place after that. Even after the meetings were started in Birchen I was again cited three times before the Session and banned so far as the unconstitutional authority of the Church could do that, and after that there were the meetings of Presbytery at Evelix, Bonar, and elsewhere, and the notorious meeting of Synod at Inverness, and finally the equally auspicious meeting of Synod at Glasgow, which occasioned our being here to-night."

"A SECRET CONCLAVE."

Continuing, Provost Murray asserted:—Astonishment was created in religious circles when it became known that the dispute which had arisen between Rev. E. Macqueen and the Northern Presbytery of the F.P. Church out of the Dornoch dispute had been settled by compromise behind closed doors at the meeting of the Synod in Glasgow. The following apology tendered by the three parties concerned—the Synod, the Northern Presbytery, and the Rev. E. Macqueen—signaled the termination of this dispute:—'We now from

the bottom of our hearts, before God and men, express our heartfelt sorrow and regret for every hasty and unkind word and action on our part that we have used in this case and we now withdraw unreservedly." Thus Jesuitical secrecy and conclaves behind closed doors became the order of the day. Fear of the open and the light of day marked every move; no compromise is possible where principles are at stake. To countenance such would be to strike at the very foundations of truth itself and to destroy those values which really count. The principles for which Mr Macqueen and myself stood were one and the same — the laws and practices of the Church. These had been flouted and disregarded by the Dornoch Kirk Session. The Session's actions were approved by the Northern Presbytery and the *pro re nata* Synod. Mr Macqueen had been publicly impeached and maligned, and up to the very last minute he assured me and those who had loyally supported him in his time of trouble that nothing would induce him to consent to a private hearing; his vindication must be a public one. To me it is incomprehensible that he should now prefer a valueless compromise to the vindication of justice and truth.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND MORAL.

Therefore, when I heard that there was to be a private conference at a time when the matter was due to be taken in public court, I had no illusions as to what was the reason and as to what would be the result. My conclusions were far from weakened when I heard from the court itself at its third public session that papers (which ought to have been put in by the Kirk Session along with its request that its own part of the case should be reviewed by the Synod) were not passed on to the Synod by the Committee on Bills before the second session of the Synod took place, as they should have been according to the practice of the Church.

I met the Session, such as it was, by written invitation, on 24th April, 1935, or over three

weeks after I had resigned. The Session proceeded to censure, without either charge, process, citation, or even precognition preceding that overt act. The Presbytery upheld this extraordinary procedure. Mr Macqueen disapproved. But, previously, Mr Macqueen expressed that he differed from the Presbytery and Session in consequence of the procedure adopted in my case. Has he resiled from that position? If so, he must now be admitting that previously he was wrong in withholding the Presbytery. If not, the Presbytery have resiled and must now be admitting that it was wrong in "trying to condemn Mr Macqueen" into accepting its view. Either way, one side or the other is now faced with the necessity of having to go back to its supporters and saying that what it said previously was untrue. And the Church as a whole has made personal what was essentially constitutional and moral. At the unconstitutional meeting of Synod held at Inverness, Mr Macqueen said:—

"I must be allowed to exercise and give free expression to my conscientious objections to the procedure adopted by the majority of the Presbytery and the Kirk Session. In doing so I venture to think I am upholding the true interests of the F.P. Church in endeavouring to prevent its Courts acting in an unconstitutional and unscriptural fashion," and now you know how he honoured his formula.

"NO COMPROMISE."

The question therefore arises: What must be my attitude to the F.P. Church from now onwards?

My attitude now must be one absolutely of *no compromise*.

Until the end of the Synod I loyally gave the Church every opportunity to face the issues honestly and frankly in public. Instead, it shirked the issues, even turning its back upon its agenda. Consequently, no sensible person now has any other alternative left than to regard the Church as standing officially for

suppression and compromise and for a testimony of a most Laodicean order. She must be regarded now as a Church which retains nothing but the lifeless bones of a past tradition. In true talmudistic fashion, no doubt, she tries to brighten the chambers of her dead past with a white-wash of sanctimonious criticism of others, at least more consistent and therefore more genuine than herself; while all the time she pays grovelling obeisance to the bones of those she denies in practice, when she is put to the test. In other words, while she would have liked, at first, the world to believe that she was most scriptural, charitable and amicable in her methods of handling disputes within her courts, she could not subsist even a week without making it clear to the same world what a mockery the whole thing was.

For (1) at the last meeting of her Supreme Court she could not resist the temptation of making it clear to everyone that the true order of settlement was not the one she represented at first.

For (2) at the same meeting she had to accept a dissent from one of her members, with Mr Macqueen absent and Mr Macinnes in open revolt, that twice, at least, previously she did not respect from Mr Macqueen.

For (3) at the same meeting she definitely shelved the very question with which she differed from Mr Macqueen.

For (4) at the same time she did not make it known that the member who broke with her, and previously supported Mr Macqueen, was actually applying for re-admission to the Church of Scotland.

For (5) she did not disclose that the Northern Presbytery actually conserved its right to issue a statement on its own behalf, if and when same was required.

“WORSE THAN A SHAM”

That is how her Synod and Northern Presbytery interpreted their part of a “spontaneous and brotherly withdrawal before God

and men of all rash words and actions against Mr Macqueen.” Truly, the whole thing is too farcical for words! It is worse than a sham. It is a very clumsy attempt to insult public intelligence. However, such a canker will demand its toll. Let us not be involved in it. It is a serious matter. It is not merely a matter restricted to “time.” It has to do with “Eternity.” Such a type of religion is a snare and a delusion. It is lacking both in spiritual force and moral consistency. *It is nauseating!* Yet somebody writing to a northern newspaper recently tried to applaud Mr. Macqueen’s statesmanship in bringing about such a settlement. Similar applause I feel would be due to any representative of the law opposed to lawbreakers if he were to undertake to withdraw his guard and was able to shake hands with the lawbreaker. That is not how truth and justice are established or how law and order are maintained! We have had before us in the F.P. Church Courts absolute proof of deliberate intellectual dishonesty and jesuitical casuistry which are eternally incompatible with moral probity. No self-respecting person can condone such practices”—(applause).

“CHURCH NOT TO BLAME.”

In conclusion, Provost Murray said they might think it strange why he did not go out of the Free Presbyterian Church from the beginning. “I am sure that is the very thing they wanted me to do,” added the Provost amid laughter. “I would say they were never more disappointed than when I did not do that. But wouldn’t that be cowardly? I did not come out here for publicity, but to fight for what I considered was my conscientious duty, not only for my own sake but in order to stop this rot which has come into the Church. I could go out quietly and say nothing about it, but would that be manly? The Church is not to blame—I have every confidence in the Church from beginning to end—(applause). The

Church's principles I stand on, but it is those who are administering its laws that I am up against — if you can separate the two — (applause). I could not with any self-respect go back to the Church as she now stands, for now we have a body of men in it who have closed doors when questions of vital interest come up, and with whom clergymen are a special order and of far more importance than men in the street like myself. No man has the right to take these things sitting down, but must expose them to the light of day — (applause). Why did these things not come to the light? Because they couldn't face the daylight. I do not know what Church I will go to, although I have pretty well decided. But I could not with honesty and honour go back to where the like of this is allowed — (applause). In an impassioned peroration the Provost asked those who belonged to the Free Presbyterian Church not to forsake righteousness but to stand by it and act accordingly.

His speech, which lasted over an hour and a half, finished in a burst of loud applause.

Dr MacLauchlan, in thanking the Provost for his interesting and illuminating address, referred to his great sincerity and conviction.

The meeting then dispersed, and many people took the opportunity of congratulating the Provost on his address.

BIRICHEN SERVICES CLOSED

Provost Murray held his final meeting in the Birichen Library on Sabbath evening. The usual large congregation assembled, when the Provost delivered a powerful discourse on "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew ix. 13).

At the close of the service the Provost thanked all who attended the meetings throughout the past year.

These services were held on the invitation of his supporters, and by agreement were con-

tinued until the Synod meeting in May, when it was hoped a decision would be reached.

But, as the matter was not dealt with at the Synod, the purpose for which the meetings were held throughout the year existed no longer. By failing to deal with the matter, the Synod simply intimated to the congregation that no good purpose was to be served by its keeping together as a separate congregation. If, in taking this course, the Synod anticipated that the congregation would thus be forced to go back to the Church, then it misjudged both the situation and the congregation.

As a body the people have gone elsewhere, some to the Free Church and others to the Church of Scotland, but none to the Church at Evelix.

It was in the same old school-house at Birichen, now used as a library, that the Provost's father, then 75 years of age, started the F.P. Church in Dornoch, after walking five miles to do so and then walking home again, as was his custom each Sabbath until the Church at Evelix was erected two years later.